

ER 8-9785

18 January 1957

Mr. Edward W. Hassell  
Committee on Government Security  
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Ed:

Referring to our phone conversations on certain questions, the following are the comments of this Agency:

1. There would be no advantage, insofar as this Agency is concerned, in extending the authority to classify documents to other agencies of the government who do not have it now. The lack of classification authorities in certain other agencies has not hampered our activities, nor the conduct of relations with the agencies with which we normally deal.

2. Although there may be certain advantages which we cannot foresee in replacing Executive Order 10501 by specific legislation, we are generally inclined to feel that the Executive Order procedure is a more flexible one. Experience frequently dictates the need for minor alterations of one kind or another in regulations of this sort, and such changes can be made readily if it is merely a matter of amending an Executive Order, whereas the process of a legislative change is usually much more complicated and time consuming. We feel that the Executive Order system is working well.

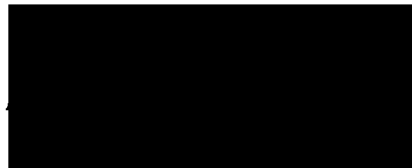
3. We believe that there would be no particular advantage in adding additional classifications to the three now provided for in Executive Order 10501.

4. The personal interpretation problem in document classification is admittedly an important one. Despite what is written down by way of definition, individuals are bound to interpret differently the translation of definitions into the actual classification of a document. We don't think that the wording of the

definitions is the source of this problem, however. Improved training and instruction of personnel authorized to classify documents would obviously improve matters. Although it isn't entirely related to your question, we feel that the method of handling, as against the classification of the document itself, is a major source of trouble. Procedures should be established on the principle of "need to know," irrespective of what classification happens to appear on an individual document. Too often the distribution of a document is controlled simply on the basis of its classification, which is an arbitrary and synthetic basis for determining the proper distribution.

I hope that the above views will be of some help to you. We would appreciate it if they could be regarded as non-attributable to this Agency in the event of any further publication.


25X1A9a Sincerely,



Legislative Counsel

CONCUR:

Colonel Edwards (by phone) 17 Jan 57  
25X1A9a  
Director of Security

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